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Inside This Issue

THE RETURN OF LORD ROBBINS
LIONEL ROBBINS
A History of Economic Thought: The LSE Lectures.....4

SAINT MAX
SANFORD LAKOFF
Max Lerner: Pilgrim in the Promised Land.....7

TRICKED INTO WAR
THOMAS E. MAHL
Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States.....12

THE WILSONIAN LEGACY
ERIC ALTERMAN
Who Speaks for America? Why Democracy Matters in Foreign Policy.....16

THE TYRANNY OF VALUES
PAUL EDWARD GOTTFRIED
After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State.....19

ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE STATE
LEON J. PODLES
The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity.....23

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RETHINKING INTERVENTION

Rewarding Work: How To Restore Self-Support to Free Enterprise

EDMUND S. PHELPS
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 1997, IX + 198 PGS.

Edmund S. Phelps is no right-wing extremist. Quite the contrary, he stands at the center of Keynesian orthodoxy in economics. Often termed an "economist's economist," he is most famous for his work on the natural rate of unemployment and for his structural account of business cycles.

In *Rewarding Work*, Mr. Phelps risks his reputation as a guardian of the establishment: he almost, but not quite, kicks over the dogmas of the welfare state. Fortunately for those of an Austrian bent, his proposals can easily be fixed so that they conform entirely to classical liberalism.

As free-market advocates see matters, the welfare state cripples market incentives. Why work, if you can get as much, or in some cases more, by idling on welfare? From Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner to Henry Hazlitt, classical liberals indict welfarism as a subsidy for voluntary unemployment.

The conventional wisdom brushes aside this view as extreme and hardhearted, but our author views things differently. "[T]he welfare programs that are not work-related, such as Medicaid and food stamps, devalue

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work and thus reduce job attachment. Means-testing intensifies the impact.... Wage earning and job holding are now dwarfed by the welfare system. Welfare pays more than work for the mothers eligible for Aid to Families With Dependent Children (AFDC) and the train of benefits that follow from it" (p. 99).

But, defenders of the present system will allege, what is so bad about this? Surely the United States is a rich society: can we not afford to provide for the less fortunate? Only reactionary ideologues could object. Do not such benighted figures as Mises and Rothbard, who condemn welfare, elevate property rights above human rights?

Mr. Phelps, amid a few disclaimers, allies himself with the reactionaries. Work is essential to a person's well-being: absent gainful employment, one's life is liable to be dreary and futile. "One of the most important rewards in most jobs is mental stimulation. They present a continual series of exercises in problem-solving.... Of course mastering the simplest jobs will generally be less of a learning experience than a career in the most complex and demanding jobs. Jobs do not all have to provide a mental workout, though, to sustain the main point.... The reflections of people in humble lines of work show that they learn much from their work and from its school of hard knocks" (p. 11). This passage, by the way, is an excellent short rebuttal of Marxist cant about "alienated labor."

To a classical liberal, the indicated course of action is simple—eliminate the welfare state.

To a classical liberal, the indicated course of action is simple–eliminate the welfare state. Then, those formerly on welfare will be able to attain the benefits of work which our author has so ably described. Absent a premium for idleness, what alternative do they have to the bracing discipline of employment?

No, says Mr. Phelps, people who argue in this fashion overlook a key point. You gain the advantages for living which a job provides only if the job pays adequate wages. Unless you have enough money to support yourself and your family in a decent manner, employment will not end the futility of your life. Precisely here arises the point at which Mr. Phelps dissents from the views of classical liberals.

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Mr. Phelps holds that there is no reason to think that, in present circumstances, the free market will provide a living wage for unskilled workers. During the nineteenth century, land was readily available. "Labor was so scarce that all hands were of considerable value in gaining a foothold on the new land" (p. 2). But this fortunate situation no longer obtains, and the lot of the contemporary unskilled is not a happy one.

> Inequality and lack of wages adequate for a decent life are two very different things.

Our author offers a wide range of data to support his claim that the unskilled do not earn enough for a decent life. These data I shall lazily leave to readers to evaluate for themselves. But my failure to discuss this part of Mr. Phelps's case is not entirely due to laziness. Rather, as it seems to me, a crucial wrong assumption invalidates much of his argument.

Mr. Phelps purports to be arguing that unskilled workers do not earn enough for a decent life. But much of his discussion concerns whether the wages of the unskilled have kept pace with the pay of abler workers. To show that they have not does not suffice to establish what Mr. Phelps needs for his argument against the market. Inequality and lack of wages adequate for a decent life are two very different things.

But suppose that Mr. Phelps is right: what can be done? Our author is too good an economist to recommend an increase in minimum wages. An increase of the minimum wage to "a sufficiently high level is bound to decrease employment: all the affected workers would be priced out of the market. No economist I know of has suggested that wage rates of $4 an hour might be pushed up to $7 by means of a hike of the minimum wage without causing a major decline in employment among low-wage workers" (p. 146).

Although this argument is too deep for the likes of Robert Reich, it is of course elementary and hardly news. Much more significant, to my mind, is that Mr. Phelps also rejects governmentally sponsored job-training programs to "educate" the unskilled to a higher calling. "It shows a profound lack of understanding of capitalism to suppose that outsiders can anticipate the training that entrepreneurs can make use of before the entrepreneurs have decided what goods or services they will try to sell and what methods of production they will try. Decisions about most training are best made by the entrepreneurs" (p. 150).

So much for what Mr. Phelps thinks will not be successful. His own proposal has the merit of simplicity: he favors wage subsidies to employers who hire the unskilled.

At first glance, this sounds like just another interventionist panacea; but closer examination shows, I think, that our author's proposal may readily be

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taken in a way consistent with the free market. Mr. Phelps is perfectly willing to have the subsidy take the form of a remission of payroll taxes. Further, though he himself favors a graduated program of subsidies–the higher your wage before the subsidy, the lower your subsidy–he also thinks that subsidies for all workers would be beneficial. This cuts out governmental efforts to direct the proportion of skilled to unskilled work.

The author has, with a roundaboutness that would do credit to Rube Goldberg, arrived at a free-market position.

Translating this latter version of the proposal into a payroll tax remission, what our author says comes to this: if the government reduces taxes on wages, wages will tend to rise. Mr. Phelps has, with a roundaboutness that would do credit to Rube Goldberg, arrived at a free-market position.

It would, of course, not do to end on a note of praise for an economist who rejects laissez-faire. Let us note, then, that like John Rawls, whom he here follows, Mr. Phelps gives no argument for his view that fairness demands that the surplus generated by economic cooperation benefit the least well-off to the greatest extent possible. ✦

The Return of Lord Robbins

A History of Economic Thought: The LSE Lectures

Lionel Robbins
Edited by Steven G. Medema and Warren J. Samuels
Princeton University Press, 1998,
xxviii + 359 pgs.

Austrians have sometimes been very hard on Lord Robbins. He at one time embraced the views of Mises and Hayek; and in *The Great Depression*, he presented a resolutely Austrian theory of the business-cycle. But, sometime during the 1940s, he fell from grace. He repudiated his book on the depression and loudly proclaimed the greatness of Lord Keynes. Although by the standards of the 1950s he remained a classical liberal, he was anxious to let everyone know that he was not a fanatic who favored laissez-faire.

After reading *A History of Economic Thought*, I incline to think that Austrians ought to view Lord Robbins with much greater favor than they customarily do. (I cannot believe it–am I saying that *others* have been too severe?) The book, which consists of transcripts of lectures that were recorded between

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1979 and 1981, is filled with insights, many of strongly Austrian character.

Before turning to the substance of the book, I must say a few words about its style. The editors, in order to retain to the fullest the inimitable flavor of Robbins's personality, have wisely not tidied up the text.

With regret, I shall confine myself to one example of Robbins's humor and charm: "I recommend in my bibliography a book by a man called Father Divine [1959]–not that rather brash man who used to make terrific broadcasts in the interwar period, but a man who studied for a PhD at the London School of Economics" (p.34). I should explain to younger readers that the Father Divine not recommended was an American leader of a religious cult who thought he was God.

The editors, in order to retain the full flavor of his personality, have wisely not tidied up Robbins's text.

A central theme that emerges in Robbins's lectures is the conflict between subjective utility and cost of production theories of value.

Like Murray Rothbard and Raymond de Roover, he stresses the importance of the fourteenth-century writer San Bernardino of Siena. He clearly recognized that the economic value of a good is determined in large part by its desirability. "Well, to continue with San Bernardino, the usefulness or the desirability as a deciding factor is not absolute. 'Otherwise', he says, 'a glass of water would be almost priceless', but it's 'abundant'.... He doesn't actually solve the so-called paradox of value as you get it in Adam Smith and some of the classical economists, but he gets pretty near to it" (p. 30). Incidentally, our author, a scholar of enormous erudition, was well aware that San Bernardino borrowed heavily from Pierre Olivi.

Unfortunately, economics in the line that began with Adam Smith and continued through Ricardo and John Stuart Mill approached value in a different way. Adam Smith, in a famous passage of *The Wealth of Nations*, argued that in primitive conditions, quantity of labor determines price. Concerning this, Robbins remarks: "Well, I hope that that's obvious to all of you. When you have an economy in which the only scarce factor service is unskilled labour, then the ratio of the quantities of labour expanded provides a key to what Adam Smith calls the natural, and what we should call the normal, price" (p. 136).

Here Robbins concedes too much. No doubt Robbins is right that under the indicated conditions, price can be directly correlated with the quantity of labor. But it does not follow the quantity of labor causes price. Rather, a subjectivist would say that the quantity of labor is allocated to each good in a way that corresponds to the subjective valuations consumers give the

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goods in question. True enough, the figures come out the same whether one adopts the labor theory approach or its subjectivist rival. But for the Austrian School, the issue of causation is crucial.

If Robbins elides this point, he is nevertheless no partisan of the labor theory of value. He neatly skewers the theory in this way: "Then Adam Smith goes on to discuss differences of skill. And he doesn't really solve the problem, but he thinks that in the advanced state of society allowances must be made for superior hardship and superior skill. Those allowances, of course, are in value terms, and Adam Smith has begged the question by just casually treating it that way" (p. 137).

David Ricardo, with great expenditure of labor, produced a labor theory of value much more rigorous than that of Smith. But, as Robbins ably brings out, he too failed to solve the problem that defeated Smith: "Well, so far as differences of quality of labour are concerned, they were for the most part ignored. It was said that labour is determined by the higgling of the market, but that, of course, is circular reasoning. If you are trying to explain value by something other than value, by quantity of something, it's no use invoking value to explain value" (p. 189). With beautiful concision, this argument demolishes the labor theory.

Robbins has not yet finished with Ricardo. He dismisses Ricardo's attempt to eliminate rent from the cost of production by going to the rentless margin. To do so is to take a specialized situation as the norm: what if an area of land has alternative uses? Then rent surely cannot be dismissed from the calculation of costs. The problem of opportunity costs "just evaded" Ricardo (p. 191). Though Robbins treats Ricardo's system with much greater respect than does Rothbard, he razes its foundations.

Karl Marx no more than Smith and Ricardo met the problem of differences in the types of labor. Like them, he invoked the market to explain these differences and thus argued in a circle. "And in Marx you find that this is rather more pretentiously attributed to a social process which goes on behind the backs of producers, but what he meant was indeed the market" (p. 236).

With beautiful concision, the author's argument demolishes the labor theory.

At one point, I venture to suggest, Robbins misses a key weakness in Marx's theory. He rightly notes that Marx had a "cost of production theory of labourers" (p. 237). But, contrary to Marx's argument, his own labor theory of value does not entail this theory of wages. Without the cost of production theory of wages, Marx's entire analysis of capitalism crumbles, since he cannot show that labor for capitalists necessarily creates surplus value.

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Robbins entirely supports the alternative that has supplanted the labor theory: he is a confirmed devotee of the marginal utility theory. Although he, like most English economists, bows low in worship of Alfred Marshall, he fully appreciates the genius of Carl Menger.

Although he bows in worship to Alfred Marshall, the author fully appreciates the genius of Carl Menger.

Robbins is at great pains to emphasize the care with which Menger developed his account of value. "Whatever one may think of the virtues of brevity, he goes very deep and he's very thorough" (p. 271). Menger spurned the beguiling elegance of mathematics in favor of a causal account of how value arises from human action.

In their rush to algebra, the competing marginalist schools were less thoroughly subjectivist than Menger. William Stanley Jevons held that cost of production determines value; the Austrian account, especially as Philip Wicksteed developed it, avoids this regression to old mistakes. I am not at all sure that our author shares this opinion of Jevons's theory, but he ably sets forward the basis for a more consistent Austrian verdict.

It is good to see that he recognizes the great importance of Mises's *Theory of Money and Credit*. It "probably provides a more detailed linking up of the cash balance approach with the general marginal utility theory as developed by the Austrians than is to be found anywhere else in the literature" (p. 316).

The editors deserve high praise for making these fine lectures available. I have noted a few mistakes: on p. 37, two Latin words are misspelled; and on p. 82, the last lines should read "not only that which is necessary." *Ignis fatuous*, I assume, is a joke. ✦

Saint Max

Max Lerner: Pilgrim in the Promised Land

Sanford Lakoff
University of Chicago Press, 1998,
xxi + 323 pgs.

Sanford Lakoff admires Max Lerner greatly. As a student of Lerner's at Brandeis University in 1949, his "adulation soon became obvious and made me the butt of jokes" (p. xiv). Our author's hero worship for Max the Great has never flagged in the ensuing years; and he accordingly does the best he can for his subject. Yet the result is a portrait of utter emptiness.

Mr. Lakoff, try as he might, cannot dissolve the fundamental paradox of Max Lerner's career. This so-called

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"public intellectual," once influential but now fortunately forgotten, was utterly bereft of ideas. Though by many accounts a stimulating teacher and an engaging companion, Lerner subordinated all else to his unending pursuit of pleasure. The "public intellectual" was a narcissist.

Lerner's parents sent him to the local school at age six; but, the school, manifesting wisdom unfortunately few others in Lerner's career would display, returned him to the senders. "I was old enough [for school]," he tells us in a memoir Mr. Lakoff cites, "but small and sickly, and my face was broken out in blotchy pimples due to a violent case of eczema. When I presented myself at the school, a nurse there sent me back home" (p. 8).

Lerner fared better the next year, when he reappeared at the school. Now his torrent of words overwhelmed his interlocutors, and the young prodigy was passed from class to class, admired by all his teachers for his eloquence and learning. He was able to excite this sort of admiration throughout his long life.

But did anything ever lie beneath the surface brilliance? The selections from the autobiographical memoir included here help us answer this question. Alert readers of it will sense that Lerner's erudition is a put-up job. We can with charity pass by Lerner's ascription of *The Highwayman* to Walter de la Mare as a trivial slip, but what is one to do with "'Readiness is all,' the learning theorists have said" (p. 9)?

The pattern of surface brilliance so early established continued as Lerner progressed to more advanced levels. He won a four-year scholarship to Yale, where he enrolled in 1919. Then as now, the college ranked as one of the best in the United States. As one might anticipate given Lerner's gift of gab, he majored in English and won a number of academic prizes.

Mr. Lakoff, try as he might, cannot dissolve the fundamental paradox of Max Lerner's career.

But all was not well. Yale, Mr. Lakoff stresses, did not exalt the academic life above all else. Quite the contrary, the college aimed to produce gentlemen; and athletes and the socially well-connected outshone our socially ambitious Max. If he could not be the center of attention, he was overcome with misery. He departed for graduate work at Washington University and later at the newly founded Brookings Institution, taking with him his bitterness at Yale for its failure to treat him with honors due a young Adonis.

He displayed at the new institutions, his amazing ability to impress the academic elite, as Mr. Lakoff duly brings out. (He should have discussed at greater length, though, Lerner's

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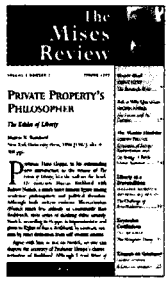
relationship with the historian Carl Becker.) One scholar, the Tudor historian Roland Usher, saw through Lerner. He complained that Lerner had treated his course in a "perfunctory manner" (p. 37). I am inclined to think that Usher, who thought very well of my father, judged better than most.

For there was little of substance behind the glitter of Lerner's prose. Mr. Lakoff tells us that, while at Yale Law School–yet another resting place for our peregrine–"Lerner was intrigued by [Wesley] Hohfeld's table for a time, but came to feel that the case method tore the law from its social context and that efforts to synthesize the cases by abstracting principles only drained whatever lifeblood the case method contracted from the living human beings whose struggles for advantage and justice were what the law was really about" (p. 37).

I have cited this passage at some length to avoid accusations (obviously false) of unfairness to Saint Max. It should be obvious that Lerner's views about Hohfeld are utter nonsense. Hohfeld's "table" is a way of classifying rights and liberties: it has nothing to do with the case method of studying law. As to the charge that the table (or the case method) abstracts from the lifeblood of the law, this is mere verbiage. All generalizations abstract from details: in what way are Hohfeld's categories deficient? Neither Lerner nor his biographer bother to tell us.

You may, if so inclined, continue to press the accusation of unfairness against me. Whatever Lerner's failings as a legal theorist, was not the law but a minor interest of his? Should he not be judged by more representative contributions?



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Were I inclined to argument (as of course I am not), I might say that Lerner esteemed himself a legal scholar of high standing. But never mind. Let us turn to a subject central to Lerner's reputation as a thinker–economics.

Lerner believed that economics needed radical reform. Thorstein Veblen had paved the way to a critique of neoclassical economics; and Lerner regarded it as his principal task during the 1930s to develop Veblen's insights and combine them with the wisdom of Marx.

What then does Lerner's Veblenesque critique involve? We shall, once more, let Mr. Lakoff make his case in his own words: "Veblen did not exactly court the acceptance of his mainstream colleagues.... Their static image of exchange...governed as it was by a supposedly timeless interplay among land, labor, and capital; ignored the impact of technological change and the evolution of institutions.... The neoclassical

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economists assumed that economic actors were individuals, blithely neglecting the rise of corporation, the trust, and the labor union.... The 'marginal utility' school was a little better.... The adherents of this school simply read a different set of values, the hedonistic assumptions of Utilitarianism, into economic activity" (pp. 38–39).

What nonsense! What exactly does it mean to call exchange "static"? Why does technological change invalidate the notion of factors of production? Indeed, is not capital theory an attempt to deal with the impact of change? The distinction drawn by Veblen and Lerner between neoclassical economics and the marginal utility school escapes me. One would have thought that marginal utility is the essence of neoclassical theory. More importantly, adopting the marginal utility approach does not commit one to utilitarianism.

Not only is the Veblen–Lerner critique of economics false: it was never developed at any length. Instead, the Veblenites simply added biased accounts of episodes in economic history to their empty "theorizing." And to add dollops of Marx to the mixture, as Lerner later attempted, does not help.

Mr. Lakoff has done his best for Saint Max, and he is not to be blamed for the vapidity of Lerner's economics. But he stands open to criticism on two points. He ought to have done more than mention (p. 73) Lerner's notorious Marxist introduction to *The Wealth of Nations*. Further, to call Clarence Ayres someone who "was later to write about Veblen" (p. 47) is so understated as to be misleading. Ayres, not Lerner, was Veblen's leading disciple.

Once Lerner obtained his doctorate, he faced a problem. The "economics" to which he had devoted his academic work had no value. Emptiness can only go so far, even in a university. What was our Max to do?

Lerner believed that economics needed radical reform.

With a brilliant stroke, Lerner transformed a problem into an opportunity. Lerner from an early age had worshiped power. Lincoln Steffens, the famous muckraking journalist, rejected Lerner for a lucrative project on the grounds that an early essay showed too much sympathy for J.P. Morgan. Although a radical, Lerner did not disguise his admiration for the power-hungry financier.

Given his love of power, the solution to Lerner's academic problem was simple. He could not carry further Veblenesque theorizing: instead, why not use his gift for words to become a commentator on public affairs? In this way, he could adore power unencumbered by academic niceties. Further, he would have a much better chance than as an out-of-the-way pedagogue to

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gain popular attention. His Veblenesque pseudo-economics could be used to add a veneer of learning to the pursuit of influence.

The ingredients we have set out can be combined with the accuracy of a chemical formula to generate Lerner's politics, given the historical situation of the 1930s and 1940s. Lerner was a radical, bitterly resentful of the class structure that barred him from social prominence at Yale. He rejected economic theory and loved the powerful. Who would arouse Lerner's hero-worship, above all others?

If you guessed Franklin Roosevelt, you get half-credit. Lerner endorsed the most radical aspects of the New Deal. Where others pulled back before Roosevelt's "court-packing scheme," Lerner openly favored making the Supreme Court a political instrument. However much FDR had what it takes to attract a radical power worshiper, though, one person surpassed him.

I of course refer to Josef Stalin, the eminent tyrant and mass murderer. During Lerner's long career as a fellow traveler, he celebrated the exploits of Comrade Stalin in his usual purple prose. Mr. Lakoff endeavors to present Lerner's Stalinist escapades in the best light possible, and he dissents from "the harsh judgement of William L. O'Neill that Lerner had 'rationalized the crimes of Stalin'" (p. 151). Nevertheless, he is constrained to admit that Lerner "was even guilty of presenting a ridiculously rosy picture of Stalin, as when he remarked in a passage quoted by O'Neill with understandable relish: 'The men around Stalin have learned his sense of power, but they have little of his saving humor and flexibility'" (p. 151).

CALENDAR

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Ludwig von Mises's
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Directed by Guido Hülsmann

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Toronto, Canada
September 16–17, 1999

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But is it not unfair to Max the Great to stress his affinity for Stalin during his stint as a columnist for the "progressive" newspaper *PM* in the 1940s? Did Lerner not reject Henry Wallace in 1948 and soon enlist as an anti-communist in good standing?

True enough, but an explanation lies ready-to-hand. In the 1950s, the Communists were no longer fashionable. Ever the power adulator, Lerner had to be on the winning side. Lerner ended his career a neoconservative, but once more the siren song of the powerful led him to his views, rather than any cogent argument.

The siren song of the powerful led Lerner to his views, rather than any cogent argument.

Those who doubt my claim that Lerner's verbal pyrotechnics masked a complete lack of coherent thought are invited to perform a simple test. Mr. Lakoff offers an elaborate account of Lerner's allegedly supreme intellectual achievement, his long study *America as a Civilization* (pp. 163ff). See whether you can extract from that discussion a single thesis worth attention. I cannot.

Since *The Mises Review* is not an annex to the *Starr Report*, I have omitted an account of a key element in Saint Max's life–his endless pursuit of women. Suffice it to say that Lerner could pay mawkish tribute to his wife of fifty years while at the same time scheming to leave her for Elizabeth Taylor and, later, a twenty-seven year old student named Mary Ellen. (During the latter escapade, Lerner was a mere seventy-five.) Of course, this pretentious pseudo-thinker had to dress up his visits to the Playboy Mansion with learned references to "the philosophy of Eros."

Such is the life and thought of a man whom Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., terms "one of the notable American public intellectuals of the century." ✦

Tricked Into War

Desperate Deception: British Covert Operations in the United States, 1939–44

Thomas E. Mahl
Brassey's, 1998, xiv + 256 pgs.

Professor Mahl's excellent monograph helps clear up a historical mystery. As everyone knows, Americans before Pearl Harbor opposed, in overwhelming numbers, entry into World War II. So much the worse for the American public, say some historians, such as the eminent Thomas Bailey.

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Roosevelt saw that the defeat of the Axis was necessary to save the world. Only American entry into the war could secure this goal. The President accordingly had to resort to deception to inveigle America into the conflict. While promising peace, he provokes war. Roosevelt's policy, it is claimed, was vindicated by the Allied defeat of Germany and Japan in 1945.

Not everyone convinced that isolation from war in 1941 was wrong adopts this bold line. Some historians, such as Dexter Perkins, reluctant to embrace Machiavelli so openly, argue that Roosevelt and the American public were not so far apart as first appears. True, the great majority of the public opposed entry into the war. But the public also favored aid to Britain of a sort that risked war. Roosevelt thus acted to secure what the public "really" wanted.

As Louis D. Rubin, Jr., has expressed this position: "But public opinion was overwhelmingly on the side of Britain; an opinion poll taken in July 1940 indicated that seven out of ten Americans believed a Nazi victory would place the United States in danger, and so were in favor of assistance to the embattled British" (p. 85).

An obvious problem with this interpretation is that it ascribes to the public views that quickly generate tension, if not outright inconsistency. People believed, it is claimed, both that the United States should stay out of the war and that the country should adopt policies liable to produce just the undesired outcome.

Given this tension, would not people be apt to revise their beliefs to restore equilibrium? That is to say, would they not either reject unneutral policies or abandon the resolve to stay out of the war? Certainly, people sometimes hold beliefs that ill comport together, but this problem was glaringly obvious. Were we that stupid?

Mr. Mahl disposes of our problem through a simple stroke. The polls that showed American support for violations of neutrality were rigged by

Professor Mahl's excellent monograph helps clear up a historical mystery.

British agents. "British intelligence had 'penetrated' the Gallup organization.... British intelligence officer David Ogilvy later wrote about his days at Gallup: 'I could not have had a better boss than Dr. Gallup. His confidence in me was such that I do not recall his ever reading any of the reports I wrote in his name'" (p. 75). By careful manipulation of the questions asked, results could be contrived to order. "In 1940 and 1941, BSC [British Security Coordination] rigged a series of polls...to project the notion that the members of prominent organizations were pro-British, avidly in favor of intervention, and intensely antagonistic toward America First" (p. 77).

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Mr. Mahl's argument seems to me a vital contribution to World War II historiography. Further research is needed, though, to consolidate his thesis. What exactly were the questions asked in the various polls? Had they been phrased differently, would the respondents have answered in a way more consistent with non-intervention?

The balance of evidence suggests strongly that they would have done so. Although a Gallup poll taken August 1940 showed an "astounding figure" of 70 percent in favor of conscription, Congressional mail "overwhelmingly" opposed the draft (p. 83). Further, a poll sponsored by Robert Hutchins, a strong opponent of the war, showed that only 34 percent of the public favored entry into the war, even if Britain was defeated. (Incidentally, one wonders whether polls still are rigged. A careful examination of the polls that showed a rise in popularity for President Clinton whenever a new act of his malfeasance was disclosed seems warranted.)

Professor Mahl offers a comprehensive account of British intelligence activities designed to involve the United States in war. The single most striking example of the effectiveness of the British effort is this. Before the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was established, a presidential directive in July 1941 set up a preliminary group called The Coordinator of Information (COI). Not only was this group, which devised the plans for the OSS, organized at the behest of British Intelligence; its head was a British agent. Colonel Charles Howard "Dick" Ellis, an assistant to the principal British intelligence agent in America, Sir William Stephenson, "actually ran [William] Donovan's COI office and produced the blueprint for the American OSS" (p. 194).

I cannot describe in detail the vast range of episodes which Mr. Mahl discusses. Rather, I shall confine myself to two additional examples of British influence. The first relates to the crucial US election of November 1940. In order to win the war, Britain needed the support of the United States as a fighting ally. But, if the Republicans ran a strong noninterventionist campaign, not even the machinations of Franklin Roosevelt would suffice to accomplish this. "The first peacetime draft law in American history, Burke-Wadsworth, and the Destroyer Deal would not have received Roosevelt's endorsement had a genuine opposition candidate stood ready to make it a political issue in the 1940 election" (p. 164).

Incidentally, one wonders whether polls are still rigged.

To secure the British goal, then, the Republican candidate had to be solidly in the interventionist camp. How could this be achieved? Mr. Mahl

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answers his question by pointing to an anomaly: the unexpected surge of support for Wendell Willkie in the months before the Republican convention, and at the convention itself.

The stampede toward Willkie, the quintessential dark horse candidate, puzzled informed contemporaries. H.L. Mencken "wrote, after watching the nomination: 'I am thoroughly convinced that the nomination of Willkie was managed by the Holy Ghost in person'" (p. 156).

Our author essays a more down-to-earth explanation. The boom for Willkie was contrived with heavy British support; the banker Thomas W. Lamont played a key role in the endeavor. Whether Mr. Mahl's account is successful must be left for readers to judge.

In any event, once nominated Willkie enabled the British strategy to proceed apace. Mr. Mahl cites in this connection a telling remark of Walter Lippmann, himself an ally of British intelligence: "Second only to the Battle of Britain, the sudden rise and nomination of Wendell Willkie was the decisive event, perhaps providential, which made it possible to rally the free world when it was almost conquered" (p. 164). Willkie was if anything more interventionist than Roosevelt; non-interventionist voters in 1940 were in effect shut out of the presidential election.

The other incident selected for discussion will, I fear, evoke memories of the *Starr Report*. (May I reiterate what is said elsewhere in these pages: *The Mises Review* has no connection with that salacious document.) Again the key issue involves the paralysis of isolationist opposition to British plans. Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, a protégé of the isolationist William Borah, ranked among the foremost non-interventionists during the 1930s. He executed a sudden *volte-face* in July 1940 and supported the crucial Lend-Lease Bill in March 1941.

The author offers an account of British intelligence activities designed to involve the United States in war.

Mr. Mahl attributes the change of heart to the influence of Mitzi Sims, Vandenberg's mistress, who had strong ties to British intelligence, and of another woman, Betty Thorpe Pack ("Cynthia"), also romantically linked with him. Our author admits he cannot prove that Vandenberg's relationship with those women changed the senator's views; but his conjecture certainly helps us understand Vandenberg's otherwise inexplicable behavior.

But is Vandenberg's change in fact a strange phenomenon that requires special explanation? One might object that it is not: if the interventionist view of the wartime situation is accepted, then Vandenberg's support for Lend-Lease responded realistically to grave threats to America's interests. Perhaps, to echo A.J.P. Taylor on Lord Halifax,

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Vandenberg "heard the call of conscience in the watches of the night." More generally, why need we invoke British intrigues to explain American policy? Once more, will not the national interest suffice?

The imagined rejoinder fails. It begs the question by assuming the correctness of interventionism. No doubt, Lend-Lease was in the national interest–but only if one accepts the interventionist account of that interest. The point at issue is that only a minority of people in the United States held this view before Pearl Harbor. On the isolationist position, Lend-Lease and similar measures did not serve our interests. Why then were these policies instituted? Mr. Mahl's study gives us indispensable aid in answering this question. ✦

The Wilsonian Legacy

Who Speaks for America? Why Democracy Matters in Foreign Policy

Eric Alterman
Cornell University Press, 1998,
xii + 244 pgs.

In the 1930s, a coalescence took place between the Old Right and certain elements of the left. Some intellectuals in the "progressive" camp, such as the historians Charles A. Beard and Harry Elmer Barnes, thought that the domestic reform measures they favored would be crippled from the start if the government had constantly to cope with foreign crises. The United States ought to avoid meddling in European politics and instead to pursue a policy of "continentalism," in Beard's term.

Today, we may have to admit another leftist to the right-wing pantheon.

This notion of foreign affairs was of course entirely in accord with that of the Old Right; and Beard found himself acclaimed a hero by those who had once denounced him as a dangerous radical. Today, we may have to admit another leftist to the right-wing pantheon. Mr. Alterman's book, though flawed, vigorously defends our traditional foreign policy of peace and nonintervention.

How does a leftist arrive at nonleftist conclusions? In Mr. Alterman's case the process takes place through asking what democracy entails. Modern liberals are supposed to be democrats; but it is often assumed that democracy ends at the nation's borders. Why must this arbitrary limit be accepted? Surely a democrat in good

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standing should be unwilling to leave so vital an area of political affairs to the control of supposed "experts."

But, it is alleged, we have no choice. The vast majority of the public cannot grasp the complex realities of foreign affairs. As Walter Lippmann long ago argued, the public lacks the information on which to base informed judgments of foreign affairs. "According to Lippmann...[o]nly through incomplete, poorly comprehended media reports are these events made accessible. 'Public opinion', therefore, is shaped in response to people's 'maps' or 'images' of the world and not to the world itself" (p. 65).

Not everyone has accepted Lippmann's skepticism about the public's competence to judge foreign relations. John Dewey, in reply to Lippmann, accused him of accepting a "spectator theory of knowledge" (p. 68). True learning takes place through communication and participation. Even our author, an admirer of Dewey, is constrained to admit that Dewey's "penetrating critique" of Lippmann "was never fortified by a workable notion of how, exactly, to inspire the culture of communication" (p. 69).

Mr. Alterman's own response to the antidemocratic assault is much better than Dewey's. He acknowledges the public's ignorance of the details of foreign relations. Nevertheless, the public, by contrast with their supposedly more expert "betters" has a sound grasp of the basic principles that should govern foreign policy.

These principles are those that guided the fathers of our constitutional republic. "[C]ommon American men and women continue to see the world in much the same terms as the country's founders.... Americans believe first and foremost in preserving peace.... They prefer to avoid political entanglements in the affairs of other nations and wish to promote the values of democratic capitalism by example rather than compulsion" (p.181).

If people adhere to fixed rules of conduct, the automatic operation of the market will take care of the rest.

Thus, Mr. Alterman has neatly turned aside Lippmann's criticism. Even if the public knows little and cares less about foreign affairs, does this matter so long as we adhere to sound principles? We may here draw a parallel between our author's point and the operation of the free market. As Friedrich Hayek has again and again reminded us, actors in the market do not consciously possess the detailed knowledge needed to coordinate prices. So long as people adhere to fixed rules of conduct, the automatic operation of the market will take care of the rest. (I suspect that our socialist author will not like this comparison.)

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Unfortunately, many American presidents have seen fit in their wisdom to depart from our founding principles; and Mr. Alterman's principal contribution is his clear and cogent account of a long string of betrayals.

He rightly emphasizes James Polk's usurpation of power during the Mexican War. "What Polk demonstrated, as John Quincy Adams noted at the time, was that 'the President of the United States has but to declare that War exists with any nation and the War is essentially declared.' Congress never declared war against Mexico. Indeed, in January, 1848, the House nearly passed a resolution proclaiming that the conflict had been 'unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President of the United States'" (pp. 42–43).

Polk's administration, then, was a watershed. The Founding Fathers based American foreign policy on seeking "to avoid war at almost all costs, lest it lead naturally to impoverishment, tyranny, and the destruction of the necessary physical foundations of republican virtue" (p. 43). Polk thought he knew better; and a disastrous precedent had been set.

Though our author deserves great credit for his insight, an attack on Polk does not call for exceptional courage. Mr. Alterman displays that virtue in abundance, however, in his challenge to three of our supposed "great" presidents: Lincoln, Wilson, and Franklin Roosevelt.

Mr. Alterman notes that Hegel, in his lectures on the philosophy of history, did not recognize that a state, as he defined it, existed in early nineteenth-century America. But the Civil War changed all that. "With the institution of the draft, the income tax, and the massive logistical and propaganda efforts necessary to defeat the secessionist states, the American government began to acquire the accoutrements of power that would later preclude even the possibility of a democratic foreign policy debate" (p. 65). Bravo! So what if our author cannot spell *habeas corpus* correctly: he opposes Lincoln's suspension of it.

Is Mr. Alterman a closet libertarian? We can only wonder, given his assessment of Woodrow Wilson.

Is Mr. Alterman a closet libertarian? We can only wonder, given his Rothbardian assessment of Woodrow Wilson. He, like Rothbard, ties Wilson's foreign policy to the Progressive movement. "Not surprisingly, many Progressives viewed America's entry into World War I as yet another opportunity to jumpstart domestic reform at home....Progressives had so imbibed the wine of Wilsonianism that they championed imperialism as the prelude to world government" (p. 60).

But all is not for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Mr. Alterman

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gives us an excellent short account of Franklin Roosevelt's deceptive tactics designed to involve the United States in World War II. I shall not discuss these, as our author's account resembles the more comprehensive treatment in Thomas Mahl's *Desperate Deception*, reviewed elsewhere in this issue. Unfortunately, he maintains that Roosevelt acted for "brave and farsighted reasons between 1939 and 1941" (p. 17). He had to "escape the foreign policy handcuffs" (p. 72) in order to confront "the Nazi threat to civilization" (p. 17). Here Mr. Alterman casts his usual principles aside.

His commitment seems to be to democracy rather than to principled noninterventionism.

Am I unfair to Mr. Alterman to criticize him for these remarks? After all, almost everyone except resolute revisionists makes an exception for World War II. But I have raised the criticism not to be mean–unfair readers will say not only to be mean–but to expose what seems to me the fundamental failing of Mr. Alterman's book. His ultimate commitment seems to be to democracy rather than to principled noninterventionism. Since the Nazi regime extended the boundaries of dictatorship in Europe, was not intervention against it justified? If the American people mistakenly adhered to isolation, was it undemocratic to deceive them for their long-term well-being?

The foregoing, I freely acknowledge, is speculative: I may mistake Mr. Alterman's line of reasoning entirely. But, if I am right, he has made a crucial mistake. Once we allow that a president was right to deceive the American public in order to halt a threat to democracy, we have arrived back at Wilsonianism. Our author needs to take the message of his own excellent book more to heart in this instance. A closing note: readers should study Mr. Alterman's provocative remarks about American policy in the Mideast (pp. 140ff) and ignore his economic illiteracy about free trade (pp. 184–85). ✦

The Tyranny of Values

After Liberalism: Mass Democracy in the Managerial State

Paul Edward Gottfried
Princeton University Press, 1999,
xiv + 185 pgs.

The key to Paul Gottfried's brilliant book may be found in note 44 of Chapter 4. Here he remarks: "This original

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"What sort of murky metaphysics is this?" many readers will inquire.

Weberian notion [of a tyranny of values] is most fully developed in Carl Schmitt's controversial essay *Die Tyrannei der Werte* [The Tyranny of Values]" (p. 161).

Professor Gottfried has long been a careful student, though not an uncritical disciple, of Carl Schmitt, a famous and controversial German political theorist. According to Schmitt, intellectuals today recoil from reality. Rather than base ethics on natural law, as the medievals had done, they exalt arbitrary values of their own into universal rules. Value, Schmitt contends, has its own logic: once someone elevates a particular value as preeminent, he will try to subordinate all else to it. Reality becomes quantitative: all other goods are reduced to units of the supposed highest value. Schmitt, following a phrase he ascribes to Nicolai Hartmann, calls this process "The Tyranny of Values." (Incidentally, Mr. Gottfried traces the phrase to Max Weber.)

Many readers, I fear, will have long since thrown up their hands in puzzlement. "What sort of murky metaphysics is this?" they will inquire. To my mind, there is justice in this response. It strikes me as unconvincing to argue that the mere use of the notion "value" entails all the dolorous consequences that Schmitt imagines. What if one value (or some set of values) really *is* objectively better than others? Schmitt refers to Hartmann and Max Scheler, who held just this position, but he does not refute their views. Why, further, does a value hierarchy have to involve reducing all values to units of a single value?

Fortunately for those constitutionally averse to metaphysics, I do not propose to go further in discussion of these matters. (Those who think that I have already said too much should keep their opinions to themselves.) Regardless of the philosophical accuracy of Schmitt's analysis of value, he, and Mr. Gottfried following him, unerringly describe how many intellectuals in fact operate.

Left-wing intellectuals, our author claims, have a particular agenda that they wish to impose on everyone else. These intellectuals claim to continue the classical-liberal tradition, but in fact they strike at its heart.

Classical liberalism favored a strictly limited state: individuals are left largely to their own devices in their pursuit of

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happiness. In these endeavors, persons of course rely on the principal engine of social cooperation, the free market. As Ludwig von Mises explained better than anyone else, the market functions best without state interference.

Once alien ideas had been introduced into liberalism, the real process of destruction could commence.

This position was not to the liking of a group of philosophers who flourished at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Among these our author numbers T.H. Green, Bernard Bosanquet, and L.T. Hobhouse. These writers, Mr. Gottfried maintains, "took to task the 'Manchester liberalism' of the mid-nineteenth century, which they equated with commercial values and a night-watchman state...they demanded that the growing disjunction of the modern age between the individual and established authority must be overcome by the creation of a new synthesis between liberty and order" (p. 13).

"What has this got to do with the tyranny of values?" you might well ask. Patience: matters will soon be clear. These writers, Mr. Gottfried holds, did not themselves establish the main lines of the administrative tyranny that followed. Rather, they provided the "window dressing" (p. 13) that enabled more radical thinkers to claim that they were true heirs of the classical liberals. They pioneered the tactic of undermining the liberal tradition by pretending to continue it.

The main lines of our author's discussion of the new liberals seems to me eminently sound, but I think he is too hard on Bernard Bosanquet. His book *The Philosophical Theory of the State* deviates much less from classical liberalism than is commonly believed. (Here I suspect Mr. Gottfried has been too much influenced by Herbert Marcuse's discussion near the end of *Reason and Revolution*.)

And Hobhouse, far from being an ally of Bosanquet, wrote a book assailing him. Perhaps, though, Mr. Gottfried can bring against me A.E. Taylor's review in *Mind*, January 1920, of Hobhouse's book, *The Metaphysical Theory of the State*. Like our author, Taylor, the greatest of all philosophical book reviewers, saw Bosanquet and Hobhouse as in essence similar. But all this is by the way.

Once alien ideas had been introduced into liberalism, the real process of destruction could commence. John Dewey, Herbert Croly, and other "progressives" endeavored to establish a scientific politics. "The work of Dewey's friend Herbert Croly also illustrates the practice of hiding personal preferences behind 'historical necessities' and appeals to science. In the end he too reduced democracy to a set of procedural and administrative problems" (p. 59).

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Here then is the long-promised connection with the "tyranny of values." Modern pseudo-liberals and democrats believe in rule by an intellectual elite. Their values, just as Schmitt maintained, are held to be objectively true. As such, they must be imposed on the benighted masses.

How was this task to be accomplished? First, a welfare state had to be set up that made people dependent on the government for many of their needs, such as income during retirement and the provision of medical care. (Fortunately, government control of medicine is less extensive in the United States than in other Western countries.)

Modern pseudo-liberals and democrats believe in rule by an intellectual elite.

Along with increased economic dependence goes ideological control. The dominant elite attempts to indoctrinate everyone in a "democratic religion." "But it soon became apparent to [Arthur] Bestor and other liberals that a pragmatism combining experimental methods with value-relativism is only a 'dissolvant'. It does not teach enough that is positive.... It is therefore necessary to propagate a militant democratic religion through public education" (p. 137).

The main lines of Mr. Gottfried's argument here seem to me entirely right, but it is surprising that he cites Arthur Bestor in this connection. I should have thought that Bestor broke decisively with "progressive education" and called for a return to tradition.

An ideology must postulate enemies–another basic theme from Carl Schmitt. The enemies in the new disposition are all who doubt that human beings are plastic objects to be molded by the "democratic" elite. Thus, anyone who asserts that important cognitive differences between races exist must be expelled from polite society. Mr. Gottfried, describing certain critics of *The Bell Curve*, avers that "they perform a kind of liberal exorcism by attempting to drive their debating partners out of the community of respectable scholars" (p. 5). Our author writes not to endorse a particular stance on race but rather to note how ideological conformity is imposed.

Mr. Gottfried further supports his analysis with a detailed account of the French National Front. Critics of this party allege it is a racist group akin to the Nazis. What concerns our author is not to mount a defense of Jean-Marie LePen and his movement. Rather, he wishes to show how dissent from the views of the elite is artificially forced into categories, such as fascism, that then are perforce excluded from consideration. Mr. Gottfried protests against these tactics: "the National Front has not called for denying Jews their full rights as French citizens. It has not attacked them as racially alien, though it has engaged in ridicule of its

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Jewish political opponents. It is therefore questionable whether the National Front should be compared to Nazi or Vichy leadership" (p. 114).

The key point here does not lie in the politics of a particular organization. Rather, Mr. Gottfried's analysis returns us to the main theme of his book, the tyranny of values. All who do not extend a full measure of sympathy to "victims" favored by the ruling elite are cast into darkness. Opponents of leftist ideology, we learn from Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality*, are mentally ill. They must be controlled by a therapeutic state run by the modern liberals. Paul Gottfried's outstanding study gives far and away the best account available of the liberal intellectual elite.

All who do not extend a full measure of sympathy to "victims" favored by the ruling elite are cast into darkness.

I shall close with two nitpicking points–what else did you expect? However much I admire Mr. Gottfried's abilities, I do not think these include the power to elevate Wilhelm Röpke to the nobility. And even if he dislikes Bernard Bosanquet, he should not have taken away eleven years from his life (p. 13). ✦

ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE STATE

The Church Impotent: The Feminization of Christianity

LEON J. PODLES
SPENCE PUBLISHING COMPANY, 1999,
XVIII + 288 PGS.

Usually I review a book by getting into the swing of things at once. What is the book's central thesis? and (if possible) How is that thesis mistaken? are the questions that occupy me. But, faced with Mr. Podles's excellent study, I must confront a preliminary issue: why review this book in *The Mises Review*?

Prima facie, the case against doing so is strong. Mr. Podles argues from theological premises, and theology far exceeds my competence. He maintains that, since the Middle Ages and increasingly in modern times, the Christian Church has become "feminized." (Our author concerns himself principally, but by no means exclusively, with the Roman Catholic Church.) By this he means that men have, in large numbers, abandoned the church: among the laity, religion is largely a woman's affair.

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Why has this phenomenon come about? It is by no means intrinsic to religion. During its first thousand years, Christianity was at least as much masculine as feminine. Further, the feminization that arouses our author's concern is not present in the Orthodox Church, nor is it to be found in Judaism. (Here, I venture to disagree with Mr. Podles: feminization is definitely present in Reform Jewish congregations.)

Is this not, then, a theological book far outside my province? I think we can see the relevance of the work to the social and political concerns of interest to readers of this journal if we pose a question to Mr. Podles. Suppose that you are right: the Church has become feminized. What is the matter with that?

Mr. Podles's answer would in part be theological: he thinks that feminization results from wrong doctrine. But a good deal of his response transcends purely theological concerns. He thinks that the feminization of the Church threatens disastrous social consequences. His reasons for thinking this precisely locate the relevance of his book to us.

Mr. Podles embeds his account of feminization of the Church in a far-reaching theory of masculinity and femininity. For our author, male and female signify much more than biological facts. Each term denotes one side of a fundamental polarity.

As our author sees matters, "the female is the norm from which the male must be differentiated. The basic pattern of the human body is roughly female...and male characteristics develop from that pattern only under certain circumstances" (p. 37). From this basic fact of biology, supported by evidence from psychology and anthropology, Mr. Podles concludes that the fundamental nature of the masculine is separation.

The author thinks that the feminization of the Church threatens disastrous social consequences.

Men, of course, do not remain permanently apart from women. But, if they are to achieve proper masculine status, they must for a time break from the feminine. "The masculine is a pattern of initial union, separation, and reunion, while the feminine is a maintenance of unity. This pattern is found on the biological level, and even more on the psychological, anthropological, and cultural levels" (p. 45).

Man then represents separation, woman unity. Mr. Podles has given us no less than a metaphysics of gender. His theory in part resembles that of Otto Weininger, a controversial Austrian Jewish writer who influenced, among others, both Wittgenstein and Hitler. "Weininger anticipated many of the later psychological analyses of masculinity and femininity; he saw that femininity was the natural condition of all human beings" (p. 191).

To grasp Mr. Podles's theory correctly, we must avoid a common error.

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The feminine is not, he holds, a principle of reception in contrast to a male principle of aggression. In a fascinating excursus, our author blames the adoption of Aristotle's analysis of the female by the medieval scholastics for the prevalence of the erroneous position. In Aristotle's view, man imposes form on the female, who is pure matter. (In Aristotle's metaphysics, matter sometimes means receptivity.)

What happens if religion does not maintain control of masculine initiation rituals? Then, quite literally, all hell breaks loose.

Man, then, must separate. To do so, initiation rituals play a crucial role. In these rites, young men, under the supervision of adult males, enact special ceremonies that mark their departure from the feminine. Often, the aspirant to masculinity must undergo special physical pain: if not, at least something dramatic happens that impresses his new status upon him.

In our author's view, initiation rituals lie at the core of Christianity. "Various actions of the Church, especially baptism, the Eucharist, confirmation, and the laying on of hands came to be called mysteries in the East and sacraments in the West.... Initiation is an important action in religions that have a concept of a realm that transcends the everyday world. These mystery religions are closely parallel to masculine development" (pp. 87–88).

Once more a question already raised comes back. Mr. Podles's work, let us grant, has much more than theological relevance. We now have a good argument that anthropology and psychology journals should address *The Church Impotent*. But why *The Mises Review*? At last, we can fully respond.

The answer can best be elucidated with a further question: what happens if religion does not maintain control of masculine initiation rituals? Then, quite literally, all hell breaks loose. Mr. Podles sees the masculine as a force of immense danger that threatens destructive violence. "As the muscles grow and harden, the adolescent male feels the power of his body and uses it to frighten other people.... This attraction to power can be disciplined and sent into socially useful channels, or at least channels that do not threaten to destroy society immediately. But the common element in the deformations of masculinity that result from an exaggeration of some masculine characteristics is their more or less explicit worship of power in crime, Satanism, fascism, Nazism–all of which are practical forms of nihilism" (p. 195).

Thus, if Mr. Podles's theory of the masculine is correct, his work has vital importance for classical liberals. Unless the violence inherent in unchecked masculinity can be contained by suitable initiation rites, we have no hope of living in a libertarian society. Early in 1999, our beloved

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president launched a massive and illegal war of aggression against Serbia over an issue that had not the remotest bearing on America's national interest. Surely the case is tailor-made for Mr. Podles's theory.

I have so far left out one piece of the puzzle. Mr. Podles thinks that, at its outset and for one thousand years thereafter, Christianity acted effectively, through its initiation rituals, to contain and channel masculinity. What went wrong? How did the Church become feminized, with the attendant threat to society of uncontrolled masculinity?

Our author places principal responsibility on what he terms "bridal mysticism." By tradition, the Church is the Bride of Christ; but Bernard of Clairvaux, recalling Origen, stressed the individual believer as a bride. Bridal mysticism, combined with Aristotle's view of the feminine, spread rapidly. But, once more, the theological details of Mr. Podles's case stand outside my competence; and readers are advised to study his intriguing account for themselves.

To one likely objection to Mr. Podles's thesis, we can construct a ready response. Supporters of "bridal mysticism" or other examples of feminization might accuse our author of reductionism. Is not a theological proposition properly judged according to its truth? Mr. Podles seems mainly interested in the consequences for society of certain theological views. But, even if he is right, what if bridal mysticism marks a stage in the development of sound doctrine?

Our author, to my mind, stands immune from this objection. He does not reduce theology to biology or anthropology. Anyone who reads his profound meditation, "The Masculinity of the Spirit" (p. 82), cannot doubt his deep concern with theological truth.

One assumption that Mr. Podles makes, though, is perhaps open to challenge. He ascribes the feminization of the Church to certain types of theology. But he needs to confront a counterexample. As he notes, the Orthodox Church remains largely masculine. Yet the Sophiology of Vladimir Soloviev and his many followers has been vastly influential on Orthodox theology since the late nineteenth century; and this is at least as feminized a view as anything Mr. Podles has turned up for the Western Church. One thinks in this connection of the great work of Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*.

As my readers will know, I do not like to see a good book go unpunished. But, so extensive is our author's learning that I have found only a few points at which to carp. Abraham did not *pretend* that he and Sarah were brother and sister (p. 68); according to Genesis, she *was* his half-sister. What is said about the roots of von Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday on p. 130 seems not entirely in accord with the remarks on p. 186. And the statement "In Thomas's theological writings all sense of a personal love for God is excluded" (pp. 110–11) seems to me much too hard on Aquinas.

But these are mere details. Mr. Podles has written one of the most intriguing philosophical works on history to come my way in a long time. ✦

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David Gordon, who writes *The Mises Review*, is a senior fellow at the Ludwig von Mises Institute. He was educated at UCLA, where he earned his PhD in intellectual history, and is the author of *Resurrecting Marx: The Analytical Marxists on Exploitation, Freedom and Justice; The Philosophical Origins of Austrian Economics*; and *Critics of Marx*. He is also editor of *Secession, State, and Liberty* and co-editor of H.B. Acton's *Morals of Markets and Other Essays*. Dr. Gordon is a contributor to such journals as *Analysis, The International Philosophic Quarterly, The Journal of Libertarian Studies,* and *The Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics.*

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